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General

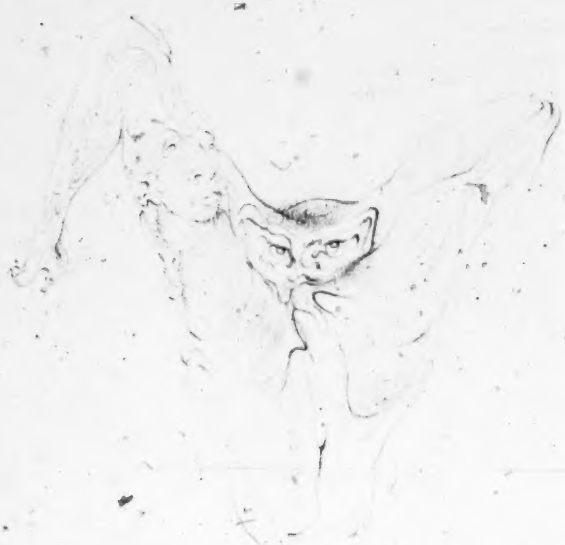
HANS BELLMER

25 YEARS OF GRAPHIC WORK
DRAWINGS & PRINTS 1942-1967

APRIL 1972

LERNER-MISRACHI GALLERY
789 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK 10021 TEL. (212) 861-9010
in association with BLUE MOON GALLERY

Composition, Pencil. 1963 8⅝" x 6⅝"



Composition, Pencil, 1965 8¾" x 6½"

At the age of 31, Hans Bellmer developed an idea that brought him to the attention of the surrealists in Paris. Sustaining himself as a commercial artist in Berlin, Bellmer began making a doll whose parts and adornments he could arrange like a collage. He photographed his doll and managed, in its several juxtapositions, to create a moving and varied but above all original image of the female.

Various photographs were published in book form in Germany (1934) and in France (1936). Bellmer began a second doll based on a system of joined balls which he had seen in a medieval doll. Hand-colored photographs of the positions were belatedly published in 1949.

The dolls were paramount in Bellmer's work of the 1930's, although he produced an extraordinary oeuvre of drawings during that period, always seeking in the young female being, the secrets of his own universe. In 1942, a refugee from Nazism, he began his journal recounting his philosophical esthetic:

Composition, Pencil 7¼" x 6¼"

"How could indeed one describe, without impoverishing it, the outline of the situation of a seated little girl who "dreams," leaning nonchalantly on the table — left shoulder raised, arm stretched—hiding the instinctive caress of her chin between her armpit and her bosom, her head adding its weight to the weight of the shoulder and of the arm, whose pressure, mirrored in the counterpressure of its base of support, glides ever smaller along her muscles, slows around the shoulder joint, follows the elbow, already weakened, goes past the slightly lifted wrist, soars one last time as it goes down the hand, before ending, between the tip of the finger and the top of the table, into the acute accent of a small grain of sugar.

One understands well enough that their attitude is determined by a certain lassitude of the child, in the evening, that she is playing with reveries of reward, with promises more or less included of an affective and sexual nature. As the denial of pleasure is a momentarily unquestioned fact, it necessarily follows that the cause of the conflict be denied, the existence of the sex and its area be effaced, that it be "amputated" together with the leg. Its image nevertheless remains available, ready to discover for itself a meaning, an unfilled place, to clothe itself with permissable reality.

Where, through the intuitive motion of the chin, the "sex-shoulder" analogy is established, the two images blend their contents as they become superimposed, vagina with armpit, leg naturally with arm, foot with hand, toes with fingers. This results in a bizarre fusion of the real and the virtual, of the permitted and the forbidden, of components one of which vaguely gains in actuality what the other yields; and it results in an ambiguous amalgam of "pure perception" and of "pure representation" whose outline becomes iridescent through the slight shift of two willed contents convergent though they remain opposed. The shock of confusion which arises, a kind of "dizziness," seems to be the symptom and the criterion of the internal effectiveness, of the *probability* of this solution, and, one would say: it acknowledges the presence in the organism of a spirit of contrariness filled with rather irrational intentions and a propensity to the absurd, if not the scandalous, a spirit caught with the fancy of providing the proofs of a particular reality through the realization of the impossible itself."

Hans Bellmer
From *L'Anatomie de L'Image**

*Hans Bellmer, *"Petite Anatomie de L'Inconscient Physique, ou L'Anatomie de L'Image,"* Le Terrain Vague, Paris, 1957. (Excerpt translated by Marie-Madeleine Saphire)

La Petite Fille Assise Qui Reve, c. 1942. Ink and White Gouache, 13" x 10"

The juxtaposition of the real and the virtual and the transfer of senses occurs not only in Bellmer's drawings but in the mind of the observer. It is Bellmer's genius that creates the balance of form and implication which allows this to happen.

Bellmer has been primarily a graphic artist, producing mainly drawings and gouaches as well as prints, with only a small number of paintings. It would seem that drawing so completely fulfills Bellmer's esthetic that painting, for the artist, becomes superfluous. Bellmer's drawings and prints are intimately related, since he invariably draws on paper first. For each subject there are usually several drawings. One pencil drawing becomes the maquette for the print and is frequently lightly rubbed on the copper plate as a guide.

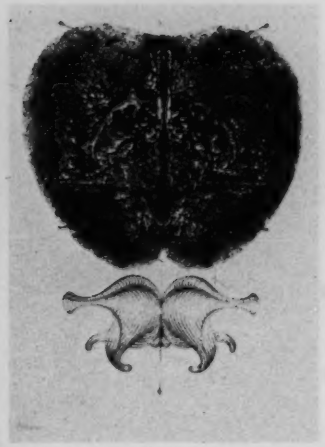
At this point Bellmer's incredible skill with the Burin and Drypoint transforms the outline into an original print with an even more finely delineated line than exists in the drawing. In an age which has tended to separate prints from drawings, Bellmer, devoting himself to graphic expression, has brought them together within a brilliant, erotic framework.

L.M. Saphire

Composition, Pencil 6½" x 5¾"

Composition, Pencil, 1961 8⅝" x 6⅝"

2.



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CATALOGUE: PRINTS 1944-1967

The following list of Bellmer original prints covers the years 1944 to 1967. It is chronological, based on when the plate was created, rather than on year of publication. Information has been drawn from Bellmer, Oeuvre Grave, Denoel, Paris, 1969, but corrected and annotated when additional facts were available. States differing from the regular edition are noted under the heading "Exhibited." Methods described for intaglio prints are approximate, since Bellmer mixed them. Burin is used to denote use of both the burin and drypoint in engravings and etching may have been used in part even when not noted.

1.-6. Histoire de l'Oeil
6 etchings with burin, 1944 for the book by Georges Bataille ("Lord Auch") Edition 199, including 34 with suites in color and black and 55 with suites in black.
K-editeur, Paris
Many copies of this edition were destroyed by the police.

7. Transfert de sens
Color lithograph, 1949
Edition 100
Editions Galerie Diderot, Paris

8. Les jeux de la poupée
Color etching, 1949, contained in the book of photographs by Bellmer. Edition 30
Editions Premieres, Paris

9. Bottines
Color lithograph, 1951
Edition 60
Exhibited: Black proof

10. Déshabillage
Color lithograph, 1951
Edition 47

11. Main articulée
Color lithograph, c. 1951
No numbered edition nor definitive state

Exhibited: Four proofs, each with the hand itself of a tan or brown hue. One background is green-black; another blue-gray; another hand colored with yellow crayon; a fourth, of which several copies are known, in gray-rose.

12. Cephalopodes
Color lithograph, 1952
Edition 60

Exhibited: Two early states in colors showing the progression of the darkening of the outlines (One proof is on the verso of the green-black proof of Main articulée.)

13. Irène
Etching and burin, 1953
Frontispiece of the book by Louis Aragon
Edition unspecified
J. J. Pauvert, Paris

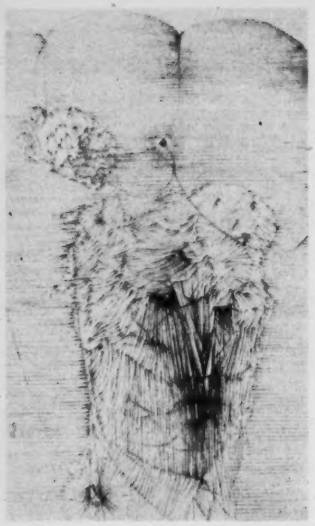
14. Claquemur
Burin, 1953
Contained in the book by Maurice Raphael
Edition unspecified, unsigned
Editions Arcanes, Paris

15.-21. Modes d'emploi
7 burins, 1953
for the book by Hans Bellmer
published 1967
Edition 150 each with a suite on Japon nacre all plates signed
Editions Georges Visat, Paris

22. Histoire d'O
Burin in Bistre, 1954
Title page for the book by Pauline Reage
Edition unspecified, unsigned
J.-J. Pauvert

10.

11.



15.

26.

23. Anatomie de l'image
Color lithograph, 1954
No numbered edition nor definitive state
Exhibted: Two proofs with different shades of pink color

24. Les main articulées
Color lithograph, 1954
Edition 59

25. Objet Mobile
Burin, 1954
Edition 60, published in 1965 with a gold background
Editions Galerie Rothe, Heidelberg
Proofs were pulled in 1954, some with a handwritten Bellmer text reproduced in rose as background.

26.-30. Jules César
5 etchings with burin, 1955
for the book by Joyce Mansour
Edition 113
Pierre Seghers, Paris

31.-40. Madame Edwarda
12 etching with burin, 1955
for the book by George Bataille ("Pierre Angelique") published in 1965
Edition 167
Editions Georges Visat, Paris

Note: Some plates of Madame Edwarda have been restruck showing a round relief mark indicating the cancellation of the plate.

41. Ex-libris: Camille Aboussouan
Engraving with burin, c. 1955
Edition unrecorded, unsigned

42. Cephalopode Reversible
Color lithograph, c. 1955
No numbered edition
Exhibited: Gray proof

43. Albert Camus
Burin, 1956
frontispiece of the book by Camus, L'envers et l'endroit
Edition 100, unsigned
J.-J. Pauvert, Paris

44. L'Image
Etching with burin, 1956
contained in the book by Jean de Berg
Edition 90, unsigned
Les editions de minuit, Paris

45. L'education prenatale
Color etching with burin, 1957
contained in the book by Bellmer, Petite Anatomie de l'Inconscient Physique ou L'Anatomie de l'Image.
Edition 66
Le Terrain Vague, Paris

Exhibited: Variant in black and green. The book justification mentions three variations of colors. The exhibited proof has the colors in different places than the regular edition. It also shows the entire plate, whereas the regular edition bound in the book has the print cut within the plate mark on two sides.

46. Petite Fille à la Toupie
Burin, 1958
contained in Crevel, Feuilles Eparses, published 1965
Edition: 60 signed for the suite, Estampes Originales, Album B and 150 in the book, unsigned.
Louis Broder, Paris

Exhibited: One of 10 on Japon nacre

47. Epure Reptiligne
Burin, 1958
contained in Crevel, Feuilles Eparses, published 1965
Edition: 58 signed for the suite Estampes Originales, Album B and 150 in the book, unsigned
Louis Broder, Paris

Exhibited: One of 8 on Japon nacre

38.

46.

47.

49.

48.-54. Dialogues
7 burins, 1958
for the book by Joe Bousquet, (unreleased)
Edition: 60 signed, contained in the album Le Miroir du Poète, and 120, unsigned, in the book.
Louis Broder, Paris

55. Mon Arrestation du 26 Août
Burin, 1959
frontispiece of the book by de Sade
Edition 68 signed and folded, plus 10 copies with wide margins unfolded.
Jean Hugues, Paris

56.-65. A Sade
10 burins, 1961
Edition 55, with 5 suites on Japon imperial in bistre.

Paris (anonymous publisher)
Exhibited: Two proofs in bistre. Color proofs are also known

66. Die Puppe
Burin, 1962
contained in the book of reproductions of Bellmer photographs
Edition 50
Gerhardt Verlag, Berlin

67. La Toupie
Burin, 1963
contained in Forerunners of the Avant Garde, Vol. 2
Edition 60
Galleria Schwarz, Milan

68. Le bon sens (also Le sens commun)
Color acquatint with burin, 1964
Edition 60
Editions Georges Visat, Paris

69. Service clos
Soft ground etching with color, 1965
Edition 70
Editions Georges Visat, Paris
Exhibited: Black proof, before addition of grid.

70. La cephalopod
Burin, 1965
Edition 100 plus proofs in various colors on various colored papers.
Editions Georges Visat, Paris

Exhibited: Red on black background, tan on black background, both on brown Fabriano paper; red on blue paper, with remark in top left; orange on blue paper with remark; blue on wine paper with remark; maroon on wine paper with remark; blue on orange paper with remark.

Note: Les dessins de Hans Bellmer dates this plate 1945-65.

71. La Cephalopode double
Burin, 1965
Edition: 100 plus, in 1971, 120 in white on black paper
Galerie A. F. Petit, Paris
Editions

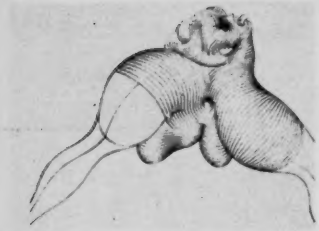
72. Transfert de sens
Etching and burin, 1966 contained in Les Dessins de Hans Bellmer, 1966
Edition 130
Editions Denoel, Paris
Les dessins de Hans Bellmer reproduces, describes and dates this print.

The publisher of the following lithographs of the 1950s is unrecorded. Bellmer may have simply undertaken these on his own. Several proofs are printed on the blank sides of pages from the book, Rhapsodies Parisiennes, illustrated with lithographs by Marquet, 1951.

73. Rose ouverte la nuit
Burin, 1966
Edition 100
Editions Galerie A. F. Petit

56.

57.



70.

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74. Sur Canapé
Burin and acquatint, 1966
Edition: 100, plus proofs with a color background
Editions Georges Visat, Paris

Exhibited: Proof with yellow-tan background

75. Saltimbanques
Burin with chestnut background, 1967
Edition 100
Editions Georges Visat, Paris

76. Les Saltimbanques
Burin, 1967
for the Bellmer exhibition catalogue
Edition 100 plus 20 on Japon nacre
Kestner-Gesellschaft Museum, Hannover

77. Saltimbanques
Burin, 1967
poster for the Bellmer exhibition
Edition 120 on Japon nacre without text
Kestner-Gesellschaft Museum

Note: 76 and 77 are the same image, but executed with different lines. Their similarity is not a result of photographic reproduction.

78. Oracles et Spectacles
Burin, 1967
contained in the book by Unica Zurn
Edition 120 with a suite on Japon nacre
Editions George Visat, Paris

79. Anatomie de l'image
Burin, 1967
Edition 100
Editions Galerie A. F. Petit

74.

76.

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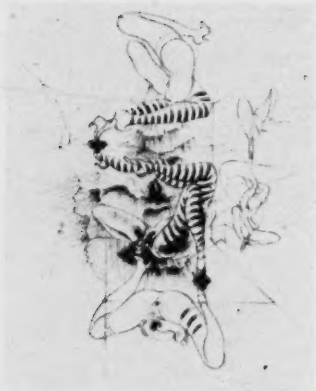

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Exhibition No. 18

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